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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Forty-fifth session
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)1

Joint written statement submitted by the World Confederation of Labour and the World Federation of Trade Unions, non-governmental organizations in consultative status category I; American Association of Jurists, International Association for Religious Freedom, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Association of Penal Law, Pax Christi International, Pax Romana and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, non-governmental organizations in consultative status, category II; Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, International Educational Development, International Falcon Movement, International Movement Against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism, Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, and World Organization against Torture, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is distributed in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[6 August 1993]

The situation of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran

"Equality does not take precedence over justice ... justice does not mean that all laws must be the same for men and for women. One of the mistakes that Westerners make is to forget this ... The difference in the stature, vitality, voice, development, muscular quality and physical strength of men and women shows that men are stronger and more capable in all fields ... Men's brains are bigger ... Men are more inclined to fight and women are more excitable ... Men are inclined to reasoning and rationalism, whereas women have a fundamental tendency to be emotional. The tendency to protect is stronger in men ... whereas most women like to be protected. Such differences affect the delegation of responsibilities, duties and rights."

Hashemi Rafsanjani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

1. Indisputably, these few remarks clearly explain the situation and, in a word, the status of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is a status of legalized inferiority.

2. In recent years, each time the question of human rights violations has been brought before the international bodies concerned, including the Sub-Committee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, humanitarian organizations have pointed to the extent of the repression and violations of the most elementary human rights in Iran, in particular in relation to women.

3. The dual repression of which women in Iran are victims has always been given special attention. Currently, the information and reports relayed almost daily by international press agencies confirm the bitter reality. The situation of women in Iran is deteriorating to an unprecedented degree.

4. Hardly a day passes without reports of hundreds of women being arrested and flogged in public. The tragic psychological consequences are easily imagined. To grasp the extent of the repression and the present circumstances it is sufficient to look at the suicide figures.

5. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has just examined the report of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The status of women and the discrimination which they suffer were considered by the Committee's experts. At the same time, a wave of arbitrary arrests took place in Iran under the pretext of combating corruption and the improper wearing of the veil. Does not the timing of these arrests to coincide with a presidential election which was boycotted by the population indicate that the Iranian authorities are settling scores with a population which refused to take part in the vote, thereby expressing its profound discontent?

6. At the most recent session of the Human Rights Committee, the Iranian delegation tried to convince the experts that measures were under way, including measures in Parliament, to improve the status of women. However, on 1 August, press agencies reported that the Iranian Parliament had opposed

sending unmarried women doctors to exercise their profession in the West (AFP, 1 August 1993). Moreover, the Office of the President of the Republic issued instructions to all public services and departments calling upon them rigorously to enforce the compulsory code of dress for their employees as well as their clients. The instruction stated that ministers would be held directly responsible for the enforcement of those laws and threatened them with harsh measures in the event of the slightest violation.

7. During this time a new patrol force comprising 330,000 militants was set up to check on the population, under the pretext of "combating corruption"! (AFP, 18 July 1993). At the same time, the mullah Mohammad Yazdi, head of the Iranian Judiciary, officially announced in his sermon on Friday, 30 July that the number of women in employment had fallen from 1,200,000 in 1977 to 980,000 in 1987. Although he did not say how far that figure had fallen since, if the size of the population, which increased from 40 million to 65 million over the same period, is taken into consideration, it is clear that women have been removed from active employment much more rapidly that the mullahs admit.

8. These are a few examples which make it impossible for us to believe the promises of the religious dictatorship in power in Iran. The worsening violation of women's rights further reveals the need to support appeals for international bodies to condemn this situation, such as those launched by Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, an eminent figure in the Iranian resistance, who is forcefully appealing for assistance to the oppressed women of Iran.

9. Consequently, in accordance with these appeals, we draw the attention of the Sub-Commission to the gravity of violations of human rights, and particularly women's rights, in Iran. We appeal for immediate action to put an end to this situation. After so many resolutions which have remained a dead letter, we declare our support for the idea of submitting the question of human rights violations in Iran to the United Nations Security Council so that effective and immediate decisions may be taken to oblige the Iranian regime to respect those rights.

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
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of Minorities
Forty-fifth session
Agenda item 13

ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION AND BELIEF

Joint written statement submitted by Pax Christi International, the International Council of Jewish Women, the International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty, the International Organization for the Development of Freedom of Education, and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, non-governmental organizations in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[6 August 1993]

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights incontestably draws its inspiration from the very best that the major spiritualities in the world have had to offer right from their origins. Present-day geopolitical realities, however, all too often point in the hierarchy of values which they profess, to inconsistencies which are at odds with the objectives of the Declaration. This fact deserves to be analysed inasmuch as it frequently gives rise to confrontations of varying degrees of seriousness both within and between communities. Cultural roots are not always free from blame in this respect, underlying as they do group and clan egoisms. Is not the main origin of the conflicts which are today tearing asunder the inhabitants of the earth to be sought first and foremost in the collective memory of peoples marked by their history, their beliefs and socio-religious behaviour which has on occasions strayed from a correct interpretation of their sacred writings? Are not just

solutions to the problems facing our contemporaries - economic imbalances, unemployment and want, social exclusion, the squandering of natural wealth, pollution, insecurity, drug addiction, sectarianism, racism in its various forms, etc. - to be found in a worldwide spiritual reawakening which reconciles the deep spiritual intuition inherent in every human being with common sense, reason and modern scientific knowledge?

Modern-day teaching of religion to children of all faiths sometimes carries with it exogenous elements which over the centuries have become associated with the transmission of the intangible content of the revealed message whose finality can only come into its own in universality. Where such elements are overvalued, they can inhibit the child's emotional and intellectual development, obstructing his relationships with others and constituting potential generators of social injustices, mortal confrontations and, ultimately, wars. The dignity of man is thus in danger of being sacrificed on the altar of a supposedly higher interest of politically dominant ideologies and religious currents. The spirit of sectarianism obscures the spirit of synthesis, which is the foundation stone of conscience and freedom. The time is ripe to narrow differences in ways of thinking and of living which have often been brought into conflict by being artificially isolated as a result of irrational fear induced by attitudes which have become dogmatic and by past wars.

With referrence to the documents and resolutions for consideration under agenda item 13 of the current session, the organizations submitting this statement respectfully request the Sub-Commission:

(a) To invite the rapporteurs concerned to highlight in a carefully considered manner, for each country whose report is examined, the interrelationship between observed violations and local cultural customs in as far as the latter appear to be inconsistent with international norms relating to respect for human rights. This would facilitate a desirable and in some instances necessary cultural evolution, which is in fact already under way in some communities.

(b) To decide to set up a study group comprising human rights experts, specialists in contemporary sciences and well-known persons representing the social and theological thinking of the main religions. The mandate of this group should be to highlight those deviations which are likely in religious teaching to endanger the mental equilibrium of children and to constitute obstacles to their understanding of those who are different from themselves and, when they grow up to their awareness of the universal nature of human rights.

The observations of the rapporteurs and the work of the study group might serve as a basis for a draft declaration by the international community on the socio-religious education of children. Such a declaration would appeal to all faiths to adopt an approach to teaching in harmony with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, which considered "human rights education, training and public information essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace".